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# THOUGHTS

ON

## W A T E R - B A P T I S M.

BY

ROBERT JOWITT.

“One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism.”—Eph. iv. 5.

L O N D O N :

DARTON AND HARVEY, GRACECHURCH STREET.

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## TO THE READER.

THE subject of Baptism is one that I have lately been induced seriously to reconsider. The question whether the baptism enjoined by our Lord was of an outward and elementary, or of an inward and spiritual character, being one affecting my own individual duty as a professing Christian, I felt the importance of giving the subject a calm, dispassionate, and scriptural examination. This investigation has been pursued with a sincere desire and earnest prayer, that I might arrive at a right conclusion. The result has been a confirmation of the opinion I had before held and acted upon, that Christian baptism is the baptism of the Spirit, and that our Lord did *not* institute water-baptism as an ordinance in His church.

The course of inquiry that has been pursued is set forth in the following pages; and in submitting them to the serious attention of my friends, I can truly say, that it is only so far as the sentiments brought forward are in strict accordance with "the truth as it is in Jesus," that I venture to ask the divine blessing upon this endeavour to uphold what appears to me, a correct and scriptural view of an important question.

When I reflect upon the excitement which so generally prevails in the professedly Christian church, and the spirit of inquiry which is abroad, I cannot but regard the language of our Saviour to His disciples as a peculiarly appropriate watchword at the present time. "*Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation;*" for whilst the

meek and humble follower of a once crucified, but now glorified Redeemer, may, in contending for the faith once delivered to the saints, find himself engaged in controversy, he will, I believe, on such occasions, if properly impressed with the words of his divine Master, "the flesh is weak," feel the need of increased attention to His emphatic injunction, "Watch and pray;" lest in advocating what he believes to be divine truth, and supporting his views by sound and scriptural arguments, he should be doing so in an *unchristian* spirit; and thereby be in danger of losing that distinctive mark of discipleship, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples; if ye have love one to another."

May the language of the apostle be continually borne in mind, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."—1 Cor. xiii. 1. (And see the whole chapter.)

If, however, we are, through divine grace, preserved in a truly Christian spirit towards others,—our own minds kept open to conviction,—and in a meek, teachable disposition, I can humbly trust that the great Head of the church will be pleased to overrule the trials and commotions which at present agitate the Christian church, to the furtherance of His own gracious designs, and that He will make "all things work together for good to them that love God." The cause of gospel truth is His own, and He alone has power effectually to carry it forward; and however He may see meet to make use of instrumental means, may all be prepared feelingly to acknowledge, that to Him alone belongeth all the praise and all the glory.

ROBERT JOWITT.

Leeds, 1837.

## THOUGHTS

ON

## WATER-BAPTISM.

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*"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you ; and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."*  
—Matthew xxviii. 18, 19, 20.

DID our Lord Jesus Christ, in the above commission given to his disciples, institute Water-Baptism as an ordinance of perpetual obligation in his Church?

It is generally admitted that baptism with water was administered on receiving proselytes to the Jewish faith ; and its being so seems in accordance with the divers washings and purifications under the Mosaic Law.

We learn, also, that John the Baptist was directed to use it, when he came as the forerunner of Him, who was about to introduce a more spiritual and a lasting dispensation, in the place of one, which, although ordained by God, and in His infinite wisdom designed to last for a time, was yet of a temporary and more outward character ; and was about to pass away, when He, whom John pointed out as "The Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world," and who was himself the antitype of

the various sacrificial observances of the Jewish ritual, had been made manifest to Israel. As thus used by John, water-baptism may be further regarded as a lively emblem or sign of that cleansing of the floor of the heart, which the spiritual baptism that was to succeed it would effect.

We find from Matthew iii. 13, 14, 15, that when Jesus came unto John to be baptized of him, "John forbade Him, saying, I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me? And Jesus answering, said unto him, Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to *fulfil* all righteousness; then he suffered Him." It is also probable that the early followers of Jesus were similarly baptized, as it is said, speaking of John, "Then went out to him Jerusalem and all Judea, and were baptized of him, confessing their sins." If the disciples had themselves been baptized by John, on accepting his message; seeing that baptism was so much in use among the Jews as an initiatory or emblematic rite, we need not be at a loss to account for their adopting the practice, when spreading the knowledge of Him, whom they believed to be the promised Messiah, but we are not bound to conclude by their adoption of this practice, that it had been enjoined upon them to do so by their Divine Master as an institution of his religion; we further find that they did adopt it, *before* the supposed injunction was given.

Whilst the other three evangelists are altogether silent on the subject, John, in the third and fourth chapters of his gospel, informs us of the circumstance. In the former of these chapters, he speaks of it in a manner that would lead to the conclusion that our Lord had himself administered the rite; yet on again mentioning the subject in the fourth chapter, as if to prevent such a supposition, he expressly says, "Though Jesus *himself* baptized *not*, but his disciples," which must be received as an

explanation of what he had before said on the subject. Though from this relation of the evangelist, we may infer that Jesus was with his disciples when they baptized; yet taking it in connexion with other circumstances, particularly that of John's baptism, I cannot regard this as constituting an ordinance by our Lord, or as the establishment by *Him* of a rite obligatory upon His followers under the gospel dispensation. We must remember that our Saviour, who, on assuming our nature, came of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Judah, and who was made under the law, submitted not only to the baptism of John, but to the rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic dispensation; and further, that from various circumstances, and especially from his partaking, with his disciples, of the Paschal supper, a Jewish ordinance, the night before he suffered, it is evident that the dispensation enjoining these outward observances was not terminated until, on the cross, our Saviour declared "It is finished, and he bowed his head and gave up the Ghost;" and "the veil of the temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom." The previous language of our Saviour is a confirmation of this view, when He said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil, for verily, I say unto you, 'till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law 'till all be fulfilled." Matt. v. 17, 18. Under these circumstances I think we are not warranted, from the adoption of any ceremonial observances by the disciples of our Lord, during His personal ministry, and during the continuance of the legal dispensation, to draw the inference that they were authoritatively introduced into the gospel system.

On John's entering on his ministry, it is remarkable how careful he was to keep in view the essential distinction between his baptism, and the one that Jesus Christ would administer; a distinction explicitly stated by each of the four evangelists.

"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."—Matt. iii. 11.

"I indeed have baptized you with water, but He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost."—Mark i. 8.

"John answered, saying unto them all, 'I indeed baptize you with water, but One mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: whose fan is in his hand, and He will thoroughly purge his floor,'" &c.—Luke iii. 16, 17.

"And I knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptize with **WATER**, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on Him, the same is he which *baptizeth* with the Holy Ghost," John i. 33. How appropriate in this view is the declaration of John the Baptist, "He must increase, but I must decrease."\*—John iii. 30.

The consideration naturally arises, whether in the course of his personal ministry, before his crucifixion, either in his numerous public exhortations, or in his more private discourses, our Saviour said any thing that must *necessarily*, or that can *fairly* be understood to enjoin baptism with water? I think he did not:—his language to the sons of Zebedee, "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"—Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with," &c., (Matt. xx. 22, 23,) cannot be understood to refer to water; neither can his declaration in Luke xii. 50; "But I have

\* It is worthy of remark that although neither of the Evangelists Luke nor John mentions the commission of the Saviour given in Matt. xxviii., the former quotes as amongst the last words of our Lord the distinction which he drew between water-baptism and His own by the Holy Ghost.

a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished," have any reference to elementary water. Nor do we find when our Lord sent out His twelve disciples, to preach the kingdom of God, or afterwards, when He sent out "other seventy" (Luke ix and x.), that either He gave them any *commission* to use water-baptism, or that they did use it.

After our Lord's resurrection, in one of the last interviews with his disciples, He marks the distinction which John had so much dwelt upon, betwixt the baptisms which they should respectively administer. After having "commanded them [his apostles] that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which saith He, ye have heard of me," He adds, "For John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence," Acts i. 4, 5. And it would appear to be on the same memorable occasion, that He gave the commission, "Go ye, therefore, teach *all nations*, &c." If after pointing out the essential distinction between his baptism and that of his forerunner, our Lord had designed to institute a perpetual ordinance in his church, may we not believe He would have clearly shown that the external rite used by John, was *not* to be superseded by that spiritual baptism of which He then spake to his disciples, and of which John had also plainly spoken? Would He not have clearly laid down the requisite circumstantialis of the rite, and have made the method in which it was to be practised as plain as those instructions were, which were given to Moses for the direction of the children of Israel? and the more especially, when we bear in mind, that the dispensation which was about to be introduced was to do away with one abounding in outward observances? But as no such explanation was given, may we not understand the command to "teach, baptizing" as having reference to that living

faith which Christ would enable his apostles to produce, when, preaching "in demonstration of the spirit and of power," and proclaiming the glad tidings of the gospel of Christ; He, the great Head of the church would be with them, and accompany the word spoken with the quickening efficacy of his spirit,—the hard heart would be broken, the sinner melted into penitence towards God, and being enabled to lay hold of faith in Christ, be made a partaker of the abiding influence of the Holy Ghost, and when the preacher would thus be really enabled to "teach, baptizing," "in [or into] the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

It has been alleged that the apostles could not of themselves baptize with the Holy Ghost, that this was the prerogative of Christ alone. This is readily admitted; but neither could they of *themselves* work miracles, or, which was a part of the command in question, "teach all nations," in the generally received sense of the word "teach" in this place, that is, make disciples or *Christians* of them. But He who gave the command could, without doubt, make those whom He commissioned to preach the gospel, instrumental to the conversion of their hearers, and thus enable them to "teach, baptizing." For let us never forget, that our Lord introduced the command in question by the declaration, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth;" and, knowing the entire inability of the apostles without his assistance to keep the command, He graciously adds the assurance, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

What a notable instance does the case of Cornelius, as related in the tenth chapter of the Acts, afford of the manner in which the apostles were, and may we not venture to add all true ministers of the gospel according to their measure, may be, made instrumental in administering the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Commissioned from on high,

Peter preaches "Peace by Jesus Christ;" and WHILE he yet spake, the Holy Spirit fell on them which heard the word: "As I began to speak," (is the language of Peter, Acts xi. 15, 16;) "the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that He said, John indeed baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost." How clearly was Ananias instrumental in conferring the Holy Ghost upon Saul, Acts ix. 17; and the apostle himself afterwards was similarly employed in the case of the twelve Ephesians, Acts xix. 6. Of similar import are his words on another occasion "In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel." 1 Cor. iv. 15.

Those who take a different view of this subject think they are supported in it by the *practice* of the apostles, on which they lay great stress, and from which they infer that the apostles understood our Lord to institute water-baptism as a standing ordinance in his church. There is no doubt that in some cases they did administer a baptism with water, after as well as whilst He was with them. But the question is whether this practice establishes a divine institution or is only to be considered on their part as the adoption of a customary rite of initiation. Jesus himself, we are told, did not baptize; and there is no reason to believe that any of the first twelve apostles were admitted into fellowship with their divine Master by this rite. Had it been that essential institution which many Christians esteem it, is it probable either that our Lord would have abstained from the administration of it; or that his apostles would have been sent forth to administer it, without having themselves been thereby introduced into the Christian covenant? I think not. It certainly however does deserve our serious consideration whether they who had been the companions of our Lord, and who were so largely endued with divine gifts from Him could be likely

to adopt any practice which was not clearly enjoined by Him; or whether they would be in any degree under the influence of their Jewish attachments, and not see the full extent of the liberty and spirituality of the Christian dispensation.

Whilst I fully believe in the divine authority of the Holy Scriptures and the inspiration of the apostles, it is, I think, evident from the Scriptures themselves, that the apostles, highly gifted as they were, and with all their privileges and advantages, were, for a long time, to a great degree, under the influence of those views of religion in which they had, as Jews, been brought up, and were slow in fully appreciating the spirituality of the Christian doctrine, and the extent of its application. This need not surprise us, when we recollect that the ceremonial observances of the Jewish ritual, as well as its moral enactments, were appointed by God himself; and, in proportion as they had reverenced and faithfully observed them, they would be reluctant to lay aside their use.

The personal mission of our blessed Redeemer was primarily, and almost exclusively, to the Jews; and it appears that, for about eight years after his ascension, the gospel-labours of the apostles were very much confined to that people. It was about this time, that Cornelius was converted to the Christian faith; and we find, that then Peter required a vision to enable him to overcome his prejudices, and to convince him, that the gospel was to be preached to the Gentiles, although he had himself received the command from the lips of his divine Master, " Go ye, therefore, teach ALL NATIONS;" and, when he came to Cornelius, his language was, " Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man, that is a Jew, to keep company or come unto one of *another nation*, but God hath showed me, that I should not call any man common or unclean," Acts x. 28. And, as has been before mentioned, when

called to account by the apostles and brethren, for going in to men uncircumcised, and eating with them, he, with particular reference to the extraordinary effect of his "teaching" upon his hearers, takes care to point out the difference betwixt the baptism of John and spiritual baptism: "As I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them as on us at the beginning—then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that He said—John, indeed, baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost."—Acts xi. 15, 16.

From the fifteenth chapter of the Acts, we find, that about ten years after this, in the year 51, about eighteen years after the crucifixion, "Certain men, which came down from Judea, [to Antioch,] taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." These, no doubt, were *Christian teachers*, otherwise it would not have been thought needful, and that after "no small dissension and disputation with them," to send Paul and Barnabas and certain other of them to Jerusalem, for the settlement of this question. It was not until after "much disputing" in a council of the apostles, and elders, and brethren, that this question was settled. The result of the deliberation upon it was conveyed in letters sent by Paul and Barnabas, and other chosen men, to the brethren, which were of the Gentiles, in Antioch, and Syria, and Cilicia, in this language, "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these *necessary things*, that ye abstain from meat offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication, from which, if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well:"\* thus setting at rest the question about circumcision, but

\* Doubtless in the infant state of the church this counsel was of the Lord; and yet we find that two of the things forbidden, are not now considered unlawful for Christians.

giving no intimation, that whilst one initiatory rite was to be discontinued amongst the Gentiles, another of a similarly outward character, (that of water-baptism,) was to be retained or established anew. In Galatians ii. we read, that Paul withstood Peter, for compelling the Gentiles to live as do the Jews; and, from Acts xv. 35, it would appear that this was subsequent to the before-mentioned council, at which Peter had been present, and taken a prominent part. We also learn from the *next* chapter of the Acts, the sixteenth, that Paul so far accommodated his conduct to the attachment of the Jews to the ritual of the law, as to circumcise Timothy; although, subsequently, he wrote to the Galatians: “If ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing;” “for neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth any thing, but a new creature.”—Chapter v. And, in Acts xviii. 18, it is stated that Paul had shorn his head in Cenchrea; for he had a vow.

In the year 60, or about twenty-eight years after the ascension of our Lord, we are informed, in Acts xxi. 17, &c., that Paul went up to Jerusalem, unto James, all the elders being present, and after he had saluted them, and occasioned them to glorify God, by an account of what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry, they said unto him, “Thou seest, brother, how many *thousands* of Jews there are which believe, and they are *all zealous of the law*: and they are informed of thee that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles, to *forsake Moses*, saying, *that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs.*” But this was an insinuation, which it is evident James and the other elders did not believe, for they tell Paul of four men, who had a vow upon them, and recommend him to unite with these men in certain Mosaic ceremonies, in order that “all may know, that those things whereof they were

informed concerning thee are *nothing*, but that *thou thyself walkest orderly and keepest the law* ;” and Paul did as they advised him; thereby giving a contradiction to the report, that he had called the Jewish converts from the observance of the Mosaic ritual, as before stated.

From a consideration of these various particulars, with regard to the conduct of the primitive church in the time of the apostles, I am brought to the conclusion, that however the authority of the legal dispensation ceased with the offering on the cross of the one great propitiatory Sacrifice, yet, that in the inscrutable counsel of Him, who is perfect in wisdom, it was permitted, that the change from one dispensation to the other, should, in regard to outward matters at least, take place gradually, not suddenly. These different circumstances are here brought forward, not in order that we may sit in judgment upon, or presume to censure the conduct of the apostles, or with a wish in the slightest degree to lessen our reverence for, or weaken our attachment to, their authority as inspired teachers of the blessed gospel, but simply to show, that, under the peculiar circumstances of their situation, their *practice* of certain things is not, of *itself*, to be regarded as an authority to which Christians, in after ages, are bound to yield obedience.

With such abundant evidence before us, that the apostles themselves long retained a strong attachment to the outward observances in which they had been educated, and that many, if not all, the proselytes from Judaism to Christianity continued, to a considerable extent, to practise the ceremonials of the Jewish law, after that law had been abrogated by the introduction of a more spiritual and glorious dispensation; need we be surprised at their continuing in some cases also to use water-baptism, as an initiatory rite, in the case of new converts; seeing it had been so copiously administered by John the Baptist, who

was declared to be "more than a prophet," even though it had not been ordained by our Lord as of perpetual obligation under the gospel dispensation.

But, whilst these considerations appear to me strongly to favour the views of those who regard Christian baptism as being wholly spiritual, it may be thought they are not positive evidence that it was only on the grounds above referred to that water-baptism was made use of.

Let us inquire what Paul says, who was emphatically the apostle of the Gentiles. In the first chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, we read, that Paul, having learnt that the Corinthian believers were getting into parties, saying, "I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ," reproved them for it, and queries, "Was Paul crucified for you, or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" (the baptism here referred to was, no doubt, that with water); and then says, "I thank God, I baptized none of you, but," mentioning a few by name, "*lest* any should say, that I baptized in mine own name;" but he does not give thanks that he had preached so little unto them, lest, when he preached Christ unto them, they should have understood him to have preached himself. If the baptism, joined with teaching, in our text, were that of water, would not Paul's language be equivalent to rejoicing, that, in *so few cases*, he had fulfilled his Lord's commission; a sentiment we are by no means at liberty to entertain respecting so highly gifted and eminently favoured an apostle.

But, after this negative declaration, Paul goes on to assign a reason for his conduct in so generally omitting to baptize, (with water); "*For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel;*" such is the plain, and, (as it appears to me,) unequivocal language of one, who was not a whit behind the chiefest of the apostles. Our Lord after having, in the same interview with his disciples, pointed out the distinction betwixt John's baptism

with water, and his own with the Holy Ghost, gave the short, simple command, "Go ye, therefore, teach [or make disciples of] ALL NATIONS, baptizing them in [into] the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," and yet here we find one of the most eminent of his apostles expressly says, "*Christ sent me NOT to baptize,*" (referring, no doubt, to water-baptism.) If Paul had not received such a commission, who had? It seems to me impossible to reconcile the command of our Saviour with the declaration of his inspired apostle, *if* water-baptism was enjoined; unless we consider the injunction to baptize as given *exclusively* to those apostles to whom the words were spoken; which those who differ from me on this subject will not, I presume, be willing to admit. I cannot but regard the injunction of our Lord, as equally obligatory upon his servant Paul, as upon the other apostles; and that in executing his Lord's commission "to preach the gospel," he fulfilled the whole command to go "teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Through that demonstration of the Spirit and of Power which attended his preaching, he was doubtless made the instrument of introducing men into the church, even into fellowship with the Father and the Son, through the Holy Spirit, and thus to "teach, baptizing."

Some attempt to explain Paul's language, by saying, that he meant, he was not *specially* sent to baptize; but this plea is, I think, quite inadmissible; for he does not himself say *any thing of the kind*, and it is completely to beg the question. It was, obviously, very important that he should not in any way mislead the Corinthian believers, or give them any reason to doubt his having received a full qualification for the important service to which he had, in so remarkable a manner, been called, which could hardly

have failed to be the case, had he told them he had *not* received a commission to perform one essential part of our Lord's command to his apostles, and that a part which had especial reference to the receiving new converts into the Christian church.

Whilst fully prepared to admit that the silence of one of the sacred writers on any particular subject, ought not in any degree to invalidate what another has said on the same subject, it is notwithstanding worthy of remark, that whilst many of the canonical epistles are entirely silent on this subject, others allude to it only in an indirect manner, and none speak of it as a binding ordinance of perpetual obligation. The apostle Paul, in giving special instructions to Timothy and Titus respecting the churches under their care, does not even hint at water-baptism, neither does he give any instructions about baptizing, in his epistles to the believers at Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, Colosse, or Thessalonica. In his epistle to the Hebrews, one great object seems to have been to prove that all ceremonial worship was at an end; that all types were fulfilled in Christ the antitype. If whilst the types of the Mosaic dispensation were done away in Christ, a new outward ordinance had been set up as a part of the religion of Jesus, would not the apostle under such circumstances have not only expressly mentioned it, but been very particular in his instructions respecting it, and yet in his epistle of thirteen chapters we find not one word on the subject, except that in chap. vi. 2, he simply mentions "The doctrine of Baptisms."

Adverting to the very precise instructions given by God to Moses, in regard to the numerous typical and ceremonial enactments of the Jewish law, and the fair presumption grounded thereon, that if our Lord had intended to institute an outward rite in his church, his

directions as to the mode of administering it, would have been very *plain* and *definite*; and more especially when we bear in mind that the gospel dispensation was to do away with one abounding in outward observances, it appears to me, that those who are of opinion that the command in Matt. xxviii. was designed to institute or continue water-baptism, as a Christian ordinance, must admit that so much of particular instruction as our Lord was pleased to give, must be strictly binding,—bearing in mind that the rite in itself is inefficacious.\* We find then the language “baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost” a part of the command of our Lord; was this part of the command duly observed? I am ready to admit, that the advocates for water-baptism might with some reason have assumed that those so likely rightly to understand the language of Christ as his apostles were, would doubtless perform the ceremony in the way prescribed, *had no notice been taken* by the inspired penman of the manner of its being performed; but this is far from being the case. Have we then ANY account of the rite being administered, in which the form of words prescribed was used? None. Have we an account of another form of words being used? So far as we may judge of the form from the narration of the circumstances, we have several—viz. Acts ii. 38, Peter says “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the *name of Jesus Christ.*” Chap. viii. 16, Luke, speaking of the converts of Samaria, says, “Only they were baptized in the *name of the Lord Jesus.*” Chap. x. 48, Peter “commanded them [Cornelius, &c.] to be baptized in the

\* I have not before adverted to the inefficacy of the rite in itself, conceiving, that had it been enjoined in clear, definite, and unequivocal language, it would not become us to enter upon such a consideration; but as the case now stands, an inquiry into its agreement, or otherwise with the nature and design of Christianity, does seem not only allowable but needful in our search after truth.

*name of the Lord.*" Chap. xix. 5, (at Ephesus) "when they heard this they were baptized in the *name of the Lord Jesus.*" Thus, so far as we are informed, we see that baptism with water was *not* performed in the manner prescribed by our Lord, respecting the baptism which He commanded to be used; and is not this circumstance alone sufficient to make us doubt whether the water-baptism administered by the apostles was in pursuance of the command of our Lord; for I cannot perceive any reason why the apostles should, so far as appears, always have departed from the form of words prescribed, if an outward rite was really instituted by our Saviour.

Whilst, as I have before remarked, some of the apostles did occasionally baptize with water, on receiving converts either from Judaism or Heathenism (there being, as then stated, no account of any of the apostles themselves, except Paul, receiving any water-baptism, besides that of John,) we find in several of the Epistles a baptism spoken of that cannot, I think, be understood of water, as "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized *into* Jesus Christ, were baptized *into* his death, therefore we are buried with him by baptism *into* death."—Rom. vi. 3, 4. "For by one Spirit are we all *baptized into* one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have been all made to drink *into* one Spirit."—1. Cor. xii. 13. "For as many of you as have been *baptized into* Christ, have put on Christ."—Gal. iii. 27. "There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism."—Eph. iv. 4, 5. To the Colossians the apostle writes "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments [or as in the margin, the elements] of the world, and not after Christ;" and then adds, "in whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made *without* hands, in putting off the

body of the sins of the flesh by the *circumcision* of Christ; buried with him in *baptism*, wherein also ye are risen with him, through the faith of the operation of God who hath raised him from the dead.”—Col. ii. 8, 11, 12.

Whilst in the early part of the apostle Peter’s ministry, we have several instances recorded of his using, or directing the use of water-baptism, we find in the latter part of his Christian course, in his General Epistle (written about twenty-seven years after our Lord’s crucifixion,) that he clearly points out what is *not*, and what *is*, the baptism which now saves: “The like figure whereunto [antitype whereof] doth also now save us (*not* the putting away of the filth of the flesh, *but* the answer of a good conscience towards God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ;” 1 Pet. iii. 21. How strongly does this language set forth the *saving* efficacy of Christian baptism; which I apprehend, few of its advocates will claim for water-baptism.

On considering this part of the subject, what is related in the Acts concerning Simon claims particular attention, in connexion with the declaration of our Lord, “He that believeth and is *baptized shall be saved.*”—Mark xvi. 16. Luke, the inspired historian of the Acts of the Apostles, tells us in chap. viii. that “Simon himself *believed* and was *baptized.*” Was he thereby saved? Did he experience the saving efficacy, the regenerating influence of Christian baptism? had he by this baptism with water “put on Christ?” We are not informed what was his *final* state, but we are not left in any doubt as to his state, when Peter said unto him, “Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou has neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy *heart* is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy *wickedness*, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.”

From which we clearly see that Simon had neither received the saving faith nor the saving baptism of which our Lord had spoken, although he had *professed* a belief in Jesus Christ, and had been *baptized with water*.

After giving the various circumstances thus brought under review respecting what our Lord himself *did* and *said* on this important subject, and the conduct of the apostles in the Primitive Churches, a full and deliberate, and as far as I have been able, a candid and dispassionate consideration, I am brought to these conclusions:—that the circumstances attending the performance of the ceremony of water-baptism by such of the apostles as did administer it, do not appear to have been in accordance with the directions of their divine Master, if water-baptism was what he commanded; that their using water may be accounted for on other grounds; that the *practice* of the apostles under their peculiar circumstances, cannot with propriety be brought forward as evidence, or have the authority of, a divine command, as it is unquestionable that they continued much attached to, and in the practice of, legal rites and ceremonies, long after the abrogation of the dispensation of which they had formed a part; but which practice in the latter case is not pleaded, as authorising the continuance of the Mosaic ritual; and lastly that our Lord did *not* design that water-baptism should be an ordinance of perpetual and universal obligation in His church, but that Christian baptism is simply and essentially spiritual.

I am much confirmed and strengthened in this view of the subject, by a consideration of the nature and character of the two dispensations,—that which was terminated, and that which was introduced by the coming in the flesh, the death, the resurrection and ascension of our Holy Redeemer. The former enjoined many ceremonial

observances, and abounded in types and figures, pointing to the coming and offices of the Messiah, who was himself the great Antitype, who fulfilled by a perfect obedience the requirements of the law, and then abrogated the ceremonial part of it, a system regulating minutely the outward conduct, and largely holding out the promises of temporal blessings, as inducements for obedience to its laws.

How different are the features of the Gospel dispensation. Great and essential truths were proclaimed and general principles laid down, and so far as we are furnished by the sacred historians with the means of forming a judgment, it would appear to have been the design of the great and infinitely wise Founder of Christianity, to leave the doctrines which he had taught, *gradually* to work out their legitimate results, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, which He graciously promised to believers; without Himself giving those specific directions in regard to outward acts so conspicuous in the Jewish Law. The whole scope of scripture testimony is to the effect, that the religion of Jesus is of an inward and spiritual character. The heart being the seat of the moral disease, there, through the Holy Spirit, is to be applied the remedy; the heart is to be renewed—the man is to be born again. How striking is the language of Paul to the Romans—“ For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly: neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.”—Chap. ii. 28, 29.

Whilst the law given by Moses was for the government and benefit of a particular family, whom the Lord had chosen from amongst the children of men, and was of a temporary character, the Gospel promulgated by our blessed Saviour and his apostles was for the whole race of mankind, under every variety of circumstance and

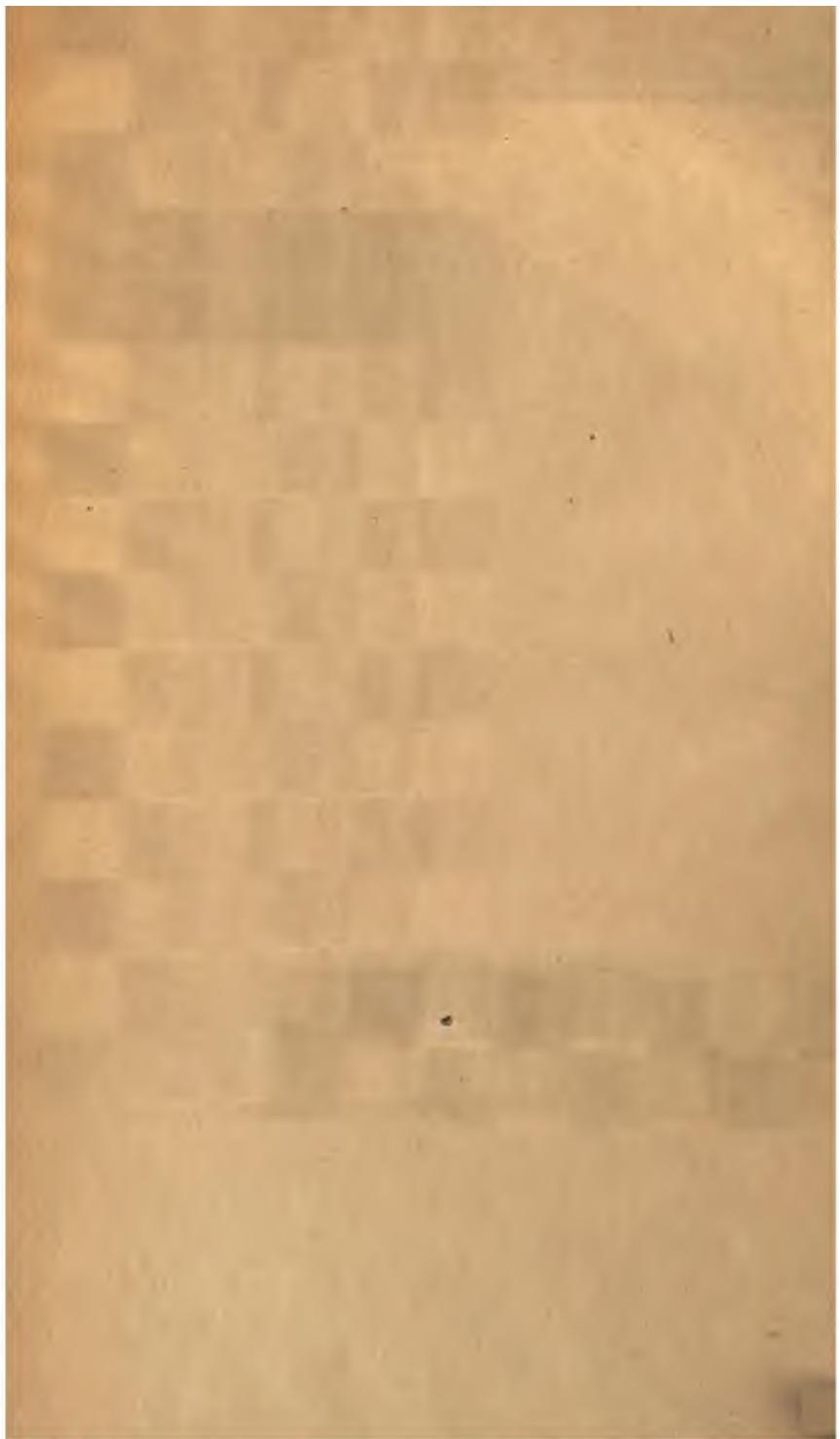
situation, and was designed to spread its benign, saving influence, wider and wider, until the arrival of that day when “The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”—Isa. xi. 9, and when “the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.”—Rev. xi. 15.

That in such a system, a rite, purely of an outward nature, and confessedly, according to the judgment of most Protestants, in itself inefficacious, should find a place, might well excite our surprise; and nothing less than its being enjoined by a divine authority in a very *clear* and *circumstantial* manner would appear to afford a sufficient sanction for such a striking exception to the general scope of Christianity.

How full is the testimony of John the Baptist to the spiritual character of the gospel dispensation, “And now the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire.—I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall *baptize* you with the Holy Ghost and with fire, whose fan is in his hand, and He will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”—Matt. iii. 10, 11, 12.

Here is a baptism essential to us all—the baptism with the Holy Ghost and with fire.—Whatever may be our views as to water-baptism, let us ever bear in remembrance the emphatic language of the apostle, “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but of his mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.”

THE END.







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